

NSC BRIEFING

16 March 1960

SOUTH KOREAN ELECTION

- I. President Rhee has won a landslide victory for a fourth term in an election on Tuesday considered the most violent in South Korea's 12 year history; *some assisted by opponents' demise month ago.*
  - A. Ruling Liberal party and Rhee administration carried out a comprehensive plan organized down to the lowest village to repress the opposition and rig the vote.
  - B. Since Rhee was unopposed (his opponent died 15 February), heavy-handed tactics were needed primarily to assure the election of Rhee's vice presidential running mate, National Assembly Speaker Yi Ki-pung.
    1. Yi defeated by the incumbent vice president Chang Myon in 1956. Political observers generally expressed the opinion Chang would have again defeated Yi in a fair election.
- II. Voter intimidation and fraudulent voting methods gradually provoked widespread resentment throughout the country which erupted into violent disturbances and open clashes at several cities between opposition demonstrators and the police.
  - A. Most serious clash, involving an estimated 5,000 persons occurred at Masan city west of Pusan in which possibly 10 were killed and an unknown number were injured.
  - B. South Korean Army Chief of Staff requested UN Command to release Army troops for use in restoring order and permission granted.

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- B. The ruling party organized the voters into teams who showed their marked ballots to each other in violation of voting safeguards; stuffed the ballot boxes, and tampered with the clocks in declaring the polls open and closed.
  - C. Administrative trickery was used to prevent the registration of Democratic poll watchers; offices at which the Democrats had to register were closed when they presented themselves or the registration officials were absent.
  - D. The anti-Communist Youth Corps supplied young hoodlums who attacked Democratic campaigners and killed at least two prior to election day.
- IV. The Democratic party late on election day challenged the validity of voting and asserted the party would resort to legal means to declare the election invalid.
- A. Democrats have momentarily seized the stage to cast doubt at a time when there is international interest in election results; their boycott of voting and vote counting may have lost them the opportunity to show the true size of the opposition sentiment.

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- V. Rhee will soon be 85 years old. His grip on domestic politics is slipping and he is unable to grasp the realities of new situations in foreign affairs. Rhee still in good physical condition for man his age, but periods of lucidity becoming increasingly rare.
- A. New Vice President Yi Ki-pung suffering creeping paralysis and can stand for only a few minutes and speaks with great difficulty.
1. It would be impossible for him to assume effectively the burdens of the presidency if he were called upon to do so.
- B. Possible dissipation of the organized opposition and disillusionment with democratic practices as demonstrated in the election may force the growing opposition sentiment to express itself in subversive channels.

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